

BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Business process improvement can yield significant results for your organisation. However, it requires commitment—improving processes can be time consuming and complex.

What's important is getting started.

Frame's business process consultants assist you to identify issues and improve your processes, thereby maximising your prospects for superior performance and above-average returns.

Why improve a business process?

Companies embark on process improvement initiatives for a number of reasons, but the goals of process improvement are always the same:

- to better serve customers
- to improve your ability to anticipate, manage and respond to changes in the marketplace

- to maximise business opportunities
- to reduce inefficiencies and errors.

Specific reasons for undertaking process improvement include:

- the need to understand 'how we do business'
- the inability to upgrade an ICT system due to a lack of understanding of the related business processes
- cumbersome processes
- employees who are confused by the complexity of, or frustrated by the inefficiency of, processes
- the need to be more competitive in the marketplace
- the desire to have best practices in the workplace
- the need to decrease process costs and increase efficiency.

Once your organisation begins to improve the way it does business it can realise the benefits available from efficient and streamlined processes.



The business process improvement lifecycle has four distinct steps:

- identify business processes
- document the process
- analyse and measure the process
- improve the process.

These are controlled with an overarching process management component.

Before commencing, it is necessary to identify the key resources within your organisation that will be central to process improvement and ensure its success.

Your key resources for process improvement

Sponsors
The senior leaders in your organisation who
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sanction the business process work and the resulting outcomes• align the key stakeholders• create or support an environment that allows changes to happen
Project leaders / change agents
The project members who
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• facilitate the change• provide support and expertise• assist with identification of improvements
Champions
The members of your organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• who believe in the improvement project and demonstrate support in public• reach out to personnel who do not support change and try to influence them• contribute expertise and experience

Step 1: Identify business processes

Identifying business processes creates an increased understanding of the current way of doing business, shows the level of involvement of stakeholders in the process, and highlights ideas for change.

This step comprises identifying all key business processes, including their sub-processes, activities and steps. The way that resources and information flow through the process is analysed and the points where information or resources move between business processes are considered.

The information is gathered from process users, owners and experts. It is necessary to involve knowledgeable sources from across your organisation as not all users may have a comprehensive view of one process.

Step 2: Document the process

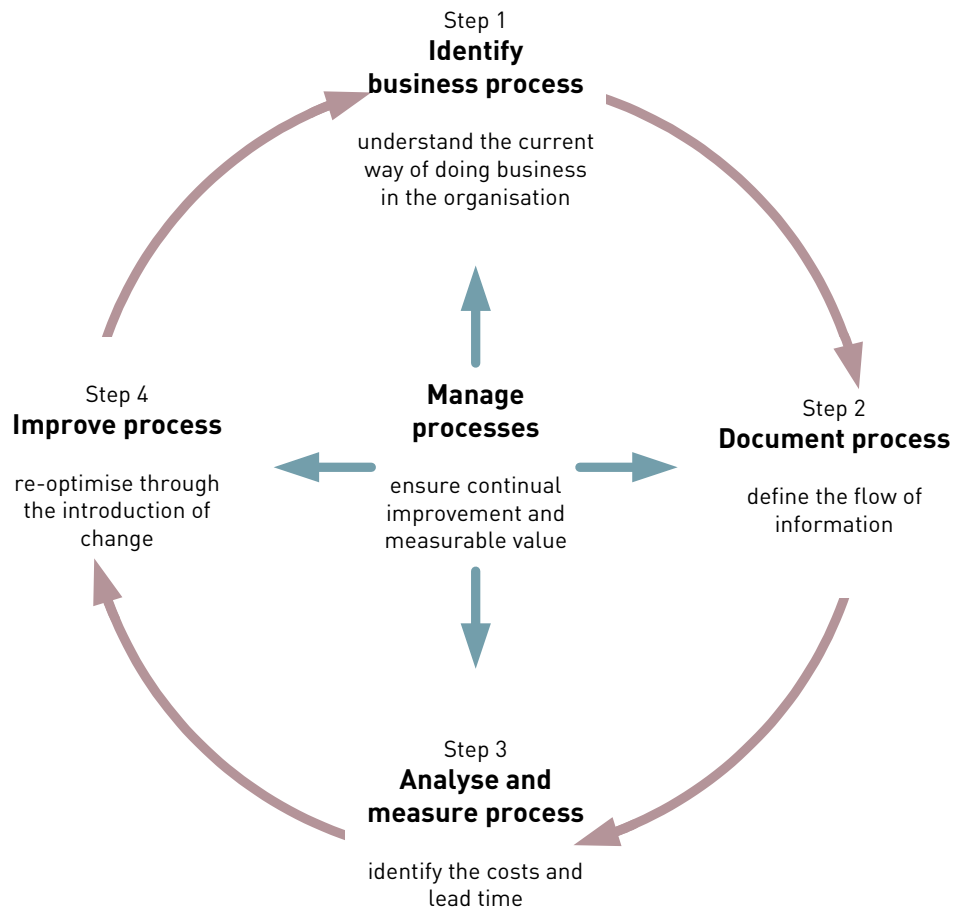
Documenting process flows ensures that there is a consistency in routines. Physical documentation is a quality approach that is also used for training new employees and ongoing maintenance.

When documenting a business process, the tasks and decisions which define the flow of information through the workflow are included. The resources required are defined, and influences which affect operation of the process are listed. All steps that occur in the process, the departments and job functions involved, are included.

Step 3: Analyse and measure the process

Performing process analysis and measurement identifies the costs and lead time in a process. The potential benefits to be realised from improving a process are carefully considered, and any anticipated problem areas are identified.

In this step, each process is evaluated to validate the current priority level and consider opportunities for improvement. Information useful in assisting with this step can include process flows, user input, policies and procedures.



Step 4: Improve the process

In the process improvement part of the lifecycle, the focus is fixed on optimising resources, promoting efficiency, reducing costs, executing actions to improve lead times, and increasing your return on investment.

Process improvement is the re-optimisation of business processes through the introduction of change. This is done by developing new prototypes of process flows, policies and procedures, or defining new reporting requirements.

The list of potential process changes that improvement teams can create is usually very large. To ensure continual, successful process development and improvement, several components are required:

- clear and measurable targets for improvement
- strong commitment from both management and personnel
- open communication to help foster involvement, trust and commitment.

Entire lifecycle component: Manage processes

The process management component is central to the entire lifecycle. Process management creates an environment where continual improvements can occur. The performance of processes is monitored and, when required, the lifecycle restarts at step 1. Managing your organisation's processes efficiently is an ongoing effort, and is critical to the success of your organisation.

Process management works toward ongoing transformation of processes. This means continually moving business processes toward new levels of world class performance. Improved process performance can be achieved through creating, finding and implementing best practices in all areas, and using the creativity and innovation of your personnel. Constraints to effective functioning are identified and removed. A dedicated process management team must be tasked with driving the changes.

Undertaking process improvement

For productivity and efficiency of an organisation, there is no task more important than business process improvement.

The process improvement lifecycle serves as a roadmap for change:

- identifying business processes
- documenting the processes
- performing process analysis and measurement
- creating process improvements
- performing ongoing process management.

Each step is of equal importance and should be completed in the specified order. The lifecycle is continuous; iterations will ensure that processes do not become inefficient, cumbersome or ineffective.

Frame helps you to deal with the obstacles

Without the unwavering support from the top of your organisation it will be impossible to get true buy-in from the lower levels. Frame's consultants, with strategic planning experience, will assist you in ensuring sustained management commitment and leadership.

Process changes often suffer from unrealistic scope and expectations. Frame's model recognises the criticality of selecting improvement opportunities that are achievable. A staggered or tiered approach to your process changes will be more successful than radical big bangs.

We can assist you with various tools and techniques to remove the subjectivity that exists in analysing and comparing processes. Limiting subjectivity is necessary as different processes are often considered highest priority by those users and stakeholders who work with them regularly. Processes must be looked at independently in order to facilitate significant change.

Process improvement may face resistance to change. This is a common reaction that occurs mainly at lower levels of an organisation. Frame's model ensures regular communication regarding changes and how your users will be affected by them. Actively involving your stakeholders in the decision-making process, from the beginning, leads to their commitment.

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